

Washington, DC - U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) today voted to address the soaring price of college tuition and remove other obstacles that make it harder for qualified students to go to college. H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, passed the House by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 354 to 58.

The legislation would reform America's higher education systems so they operate in the best interests of students and families.

"Every child born in this country deserves the opportunity to go to college," said Congressman Hall. "But more and more, high prices and obstacles are putting a college education further out of reach for America's students. Students and their families are faced with rising tuition, an overly complex student aid process, and a student loan industry plagued by corruption and conflicts of interest."

An October 2007 report from the College Board showed that, over the previous five years, tuition and fees had increased across the board, at public and private colleges and at two-year and four-year colleges. In New York, tuition and fees at private colleges grew by 7 percent between 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act would address these rising prices by encouraging colleges to rein in price increases, ensuring that states maintain their commitments to higher education funding, and providing students and families with consumer friendly information on college pricing and the factors driving tuition increases.

"The College Opportunity and Affordability Act is the second major step that this Congress has taken to make college more affordable and accessible for all qualified students," said Hall. "Last year, Congress enacted into law a \$20 billion increase in college financial aid, the largest increase in student aid since the G.I. Bill of 1944."

The legislation also strengthens provisions previously approved by the House to avoid conflicts of interest in the student loan programs. The bill's new provisions include requiring better consumer disclosures and protections on private student loans.

"These protections form the first Bill of Rights for college consumers," said Hall.

In addition, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act would:

- Streamline the federal student financial aid application process;
 - Make textbook costs more manageable for students by, among other things, helping them plan for textbook expenses in advance of each semester;
 - Allow students to receive year-round Pell Grant scholarships;
 - Strengthen college readiness and support programs for minority and low-income students;
 - Increase college aid and support programs for veterans and military families;
 - Improve safety on college campuses and help schools recover and rebuild after a disaster;
 - Ensure equal college opportunities and fair learning environments for students with disabilities; and
 - Strengthen America's workforce and economic competitiveness by boosting science, technology, and foreign language educational opportunities.
- H.R. 4137 is a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the primary federal law aimed at expanding college

access for low- and middle-income students. The bill is supported by a broad coalition of students, colleges and universities, consumer rights advocacy groups, minority organizations, and more.

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